0-18 (Rev. 12-9-66)

Ferrie Death Probed, Link to 'Plot' Is Denied

A former investigator who claimed to know four conspirators in a 1963 plot to assassinate President Kennedy dropped out of sight early today in New Orleans, but later showed up at Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's office there.

David Lewis, 26, met reporters briefly, to say that David W. Ferrie, 49, former Eastern Airlines pilot found dead in his apartment yesterday was not one of the "possible members of the plot."

Lewis said previously he had given Garrison four or five names of persons involved in the conspiracy, and as a result feared for his life.

He dropped out of sight with his wife and four children last night, but reappeared at the district attorney's office today.

United Press International said he refused to say anything other than that Ferrie was not one of the group he knew.

Ferrie was mentioned in the Warren Report and questioned by Garrison in his new investigation of the assassination. Garrison called his death apparent suicide. The coroner said suicide was possible.

Washington sources who refused to be identified told UPI that a Warren Commission investigation of Ferrie showed that he had no connection with the Kennedy assassination.

"The allegations of Ferrie's connection with an assassination plot were washed out by the investigations done for the Warren Commission," the unidentified sources said.

Ferrie emphatically denied in 1963 that he knew either Lee Harvely Oswald or Jack Ruby.

The FBI investigation at the time found nothing to tie Ferrie to the assassination, the Associated Press noted.

Statements Ferrie made under questioning by the FBI are included in the Warren Commission Report in the National Archives here. Nineteen pages of testimony about Ferrie are open to public scrutiny. About 40 more pages, believed to involve Ferrie but also to deal with FBI techniques and mode of operation, are kept secret.

Oswald was named by the Warren Commission as the assassin of President Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. Ruby was convicted of slaying Oswald two days later.

"Do Not Know Oswald"

"To my best knowledge and belief, I do not know Lee Harvey Oswald and have no personal recollection of ever having met him," Ferrie said Dec. 10, 1963, in a signed statement to the FBI. "If I did ever meet him it was casual and to my best recollection have definitely not seen him in recent years."

"To my knowledge, I have never met Jack Ruby, who I understand, from public sources, operated a night club in Dallas. I have seen a photograph of Jack Ruby and I do not recognize this photograph to be a person with whom I am acquainted."

The FBI investigated Ferrie in 1963, following up telephone leads, and found him to have no connection with Oswald, Ruby or the assassination, according to statements given the Warren Commission.

Agents John W. Rice and Anthony E. Gerrets conducted one investigation of Ferrie during the period Nov. 24-29 based on leads provided by a Jack S. Martin, a private investigator, to the New Orleans district attorney's office. They said Martin appeared to be an alcoholic.

Tolson
DeLoach
Mohr
Wick
Casper
Callahan
Conrad
Felt
Gale
Rosen
Sullivan
Tavel
Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

Let me know details of 40 pages which are said to be classified -

The Washington Post
Times Herald
The Washington Daily News
The Evening Star (Washington)
The Sunday Star (Washington)
Daily News (New York)
Sunday News (New York)
New York Post
The New York Times
World Journal Tribune (New York)
The Sun (Baltimore)
The Worker
The New Leader
The Wall Street Journal
The National Observer
People's World

Date FEB 23 1967

ENCLOSURE

REC-74

25 FEB 28 1967

"Investigation disclosed that information furnished by Jack S. Martin to the effect that David William Ferrie associated with Lee Harvey Oswald at New Orleans and trained Oswald in the use of a rifle with a telescopic lense (sic), also that Ferrie had visited Dallas several weeks prior to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is without foundation," they said in a signed statement.

Other statements indicate the FBI investigated Ferrie's whereabouts during the period immediately before and after Kennedy's assassination There are signed statements indicating Ferrie and two companions made a trip by car to Houston and Galveston during the period.

There was a discrepancy over the time of Ferrie's death.

An unsigned, undated note was found in Ferrie's apartment saying that death would be "sweet prospect."

George Larder Jr., a Washington Post reporter who may have been the last man to see Ferrie alive, said Ferrie told him he was convinced Oswald killed the President Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, and acted alone.

Lardner told UPI he thought there was no mystery about an apparent discrepency in the time of Ferrie's death. Lardner said Ferrie was alive when he left Ferrie's apartment at 4 a.m. Wednesday.

The Coroner, Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, had put the time of death at Tuesday night, and Garrison called the differing times "one of the mysteries we don't understand."

"Ferrie was certainly living when I said good-bye to him Wednesday shortly before 4 a.m.," Lardner said. "I can see nothing inconsistent about that."

Ferrie told Lardner that he never knew Oswald and never met him as far as he remembered.

Dr. Chetta said Ferrie's death had to have occurred before 4 a.m. but Lardner insisted he had visited with Ferrie until that hour.

Dr. Chetta, an M.D., said Ferrie suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage when a blood vessel burst at the base of his brain. The coroner called this the cause of death Wednesday night, but said today he was not sure, and indicated he felt Ferrie could have killed himself.

Ferrie Called "Involved"

Garrison described Ferrie as "one of history's most important individuals" and said he was "involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy."

Garrison, at a hurried news conference, announced dramatically he now was not even accepting the Warren Commission's conclusion that Oswald killed Kennedy.

"I have no reason to believe at this time that Lee Harvey Oswald killed anybody in Dallas on Nov. 22.," Garrison said.

Ferrie said in an interview Saturday with the New Orleans States-Item he was afraid he was suspected of being a "getaway pilot in an elaborate plot" to kill Kennedy.

Garrison said he had feared Ferrie might commit suicide.

"Because of this . . . we had reached a decision to arrest him early next week," Garrison said. "Apparently we waited too long."

Had Encephalitis

Found near Ferrie was the unsigned, undated, unaddressed note saying, "to leave this life is for me a sweet prospect. I find nothing in it that is desirable and on the other hand everything that is loathsome."

Eastern Air Lines suspended Ferrie because of a 1961 arrest in Suburban Jefferson Parish and Ferrie eventually quit.

Lardner said Ferrie did not seem to be depressed.

Ferrie had been ill for several weeks with encephalitis. Investigators found 15 bottles of pills in his apartment. It was not known whether he had taken any of them or what they were.

Ferrie ran a flying service from New Orleans Lakefront Airport. He had no office. He operated out of the terminal coffee shop.

AP said a New Orleans florist, Edward Voebel, had seen Oswald's picture on television and reported that he and Oswald had served in a Civil Air Patrol squadron under Ferrie. When authorities sought to question Ferrie, they found he had gone to Texas.

Ferrie told a newsman recently that he and two friends took a short vacation trip to Texas the day of the assassination "on the spur of the moment." He said they visited Houston, Galveston and Alexandria, La., before returning home. They did not go to Dallas, he said.

And Ferrie said he and Voebel were in separate CAP squadrons.

A New Orleans police detective, Frederick S. O'Sullivan, told the Warren Commission he knew of no evidence that Oswald was acquainted with Ferrie. However, the district attorney hinted that he was close to finding a thread connecting Ferrie and Oswald.

DIST. ATTY. JIM GARRISON
Calls It Suicide

DAVID W. FERRIE
Found Dead

DR. NICHOLAS CHETTA